

VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Montpelier Room, Capitol Plaza Conference Center, 100 State Street, Montpelier
March 16, 2010

The State Board and Department of Education provide support and leadership in the transformation of the Vermont education system in order to give each learner the opportunity to succeed in the 21st century.

Approved MINUTES

Present

Board Members: Chair Fayneese Miller; Vice-chair Kathy Larsen; Alex Melville; Robert Kelley; Stephan Morse; Brian Vachon; Don Collins; John Hall; Judith Livingston

DOE: Commissioner Armando Vilaseca; Mark Oettinger; Bart Devon; Jill Remick; Riva Dumont; Rae Ann Knopf; Michael Hock; Gail Taylor; Marty Gephart; Carol King; Pat Fitzsimmons; Bill Talbott;

Others: Jeff Francis, VSA; Sherry Gile, VTNEA; Larry Rich, ACT; Peter Evans, Montpelier High School; Tom Sabo, Montpelier High School; Scott Switzer; Mark Mason

Preliminaries

Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance

Fayneese Miller, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:50 a.m., and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item B: Roll Call and Introductions

Board members introduced themselves.

Item C: Announcements, Board Member Updates

Kathy Larsen reported on the February 18-19 NASBE regional Common Core meeting in Philadelphia she attended along with member Don Collins and Deputy Commissioner Rae Ann Knopf. She noted that the national Common Core is now out for public comment.

Larsen also reported on the March 5 NESSC meeting in Boston which she attended, along with Rae Ann Knopf and Armando Vilaseca and other members of the Vermont committee.

Fayneese Miller reported that she testified before the House Education Committee on March 11. The primary focus of the committee's discussion was the 2008 Business Education Alliance report, which addressed multiple areas: appointment and selection of the commissioner; selection and constituency of Board members (i.e., should they represent particular categories). Miller reported that she did not speak in favor of proposal, noting that it doesn't allow for a public board nor does it include student representation.

Miller also reported on her recent participation in a national NCATE meeting. Much of the discussion focused on PreK-12 and Higher Ed working together.

Item E: Commissioner's Update (Armando Vilaseca, Commissioner)

Commissioner Vilaseca reported on the following items:

- Rep. Peter Peltz's school redistricting bill (which has been given additional time for submission following crossover)
- *Challenges for Change* Design Team work (which needs to be completed by March 25) – requires a \$51 M reduction in spending by FY 2012

Board member Stephan Morse is a member of the design team and noted that this is an unprecedented process in that it identifies actual amounts of moneys to be cut. Kathy Larsen asked if there was actual data or information about whether or not consolidation of this type will save money. She noted her concern about saving money versus providing opportunities for students. Commissioner Vilaseca stated that the design team is working under two premises: increased graduation requirements and increased post-secondary aspirations. Don Collins stated that the Education Transformation Policy Commission looked at this during its deliberations and found that type of information to be non-existent. He encouraged the Board chair and commissioner to engage with other legislators.

Chair Miller noted that she and the commissioner will continue to monitor the agendas of the house and senate education committees. Brian Vachon asked for clarification on the special education component of the Challenge to Change work.

Vilaseca also reported on the recent ranking of Title I schools, pursuant to the requirements of ARRA. He stated that an error in the calculations had been made and two schools would be dropped off the list and two different schools would be added. He stated how difficult these discussions have been, and commended the work of department staff members, noting that this is uncharted territory due to requirements in place as a result of accepting the SFSF moneys. He also noted his concern about the implementation of federal requirements in a rural environment.

The USED just released information on the reauthorization of ESEA. Information on its *Blueprint for Change* will be sent to Board members.

Item D: Public to be Heard

Rep. Heidi Scheuermann (Stowe) – applauded the work of the Board and the work of the Education Transformation Policy commission on its *Opportunities to Learn* report, noting its recommendations regarding education quality and expanding opportunities for students. She tied the recommendations in that report to the provisions in the bill (H.755) she has submitted. She believes that her bill addresses both the quality and funding aspects of education, noting that funding is an area, in particular, that needs to be tackled. She noted that the House Education Committee is working on the voluntary redistricting bill (the Peltz bill) but has concerns about whether or not that bill addresses funding adequately. She has had discussion with the Senate Education Committee regarding provisions in her bill to address funding and the demands of the current funding mechanism. Don Collins encouraged her to continue discussions with that committee and to encourage them to delve into a deeper analysis. Scheuermann closed by expressing her hope that the State Board will support legislative efforts, especially with respect to quality and funding.

Helen Hossley, Burlington (involved parent, advocate for public education) – expressed her support for the current work on consolidation of school districts, noting that she is aware of areas

where efficiencies and economies of scale can be achieved: purchasing, bus scheduling, payrolls., etc. She believes that time and incentives can achieve this, step by step and in concert with partnering organizations. She requested that the Board schedule time for further discussion.

Jeff Francis, VSA – noted his appreciation for the current conversations and stated that he had been observing the Challenge to Change discussions and was happy to see parties talking together. He reiterated the VSA’s position: K-12 units with a single board. He noted that there are many discussions about reducing administrative costs but feels that the current discussion avoids discussion on the larger cost centers in education. He also spoke of the increased mandates, largely unfunded, being placed on education, and expressed his strong desire that attention be paid to both procedural and administrative costs, that incremental costs, when added up, contribute much to the cost of education. As an example, he cited the process cost that PreK rules will add. He also expressed concern about the diminished capacity of state government, and in particular the VTDOE, to be able to do the analyses that need to be done at this time. He questioned how the cost reduction targets set for FY 2012 is going to be accomplished.

Kathy Larsen asked if a job description for business managers existed. Francis noted that there is a great range in the job duties performed by business managers. He stated that the “administrative cost” definition needs to be expanded in the current discussions. He also stated that credit needs to be given to local school boards for the work they have done in the past two years to control costs.

Item F: Redistricting Commission (Fayneese Miller, Armando Vilaseca)

Miller stated that because of the work and focus created through the Challenge to Change legislation and the resulting design team, the Board’s redistricting commission has been put on hold until the Challenge to Change design team has completed its work. The redistricting commission **could** be charged with addressing recommendations coming from design team.

Item G: Legislative Update (Armando Vilaseca, Bill Talbott, Rae Ann Knopf, Mark Oettinger)

Oettinger updated Board members on recent happenings in the Legislature, noting that it had been back in session for one week following the Town Meeting break. His update included information on the following:

The Miscellaneous Education bill – which addresses an accumulation of areas that need addressing

- H709 – relating to the establishment of a PreK-16 Council
- S259 – designated school tuition
- The “Peter Peltz” bill – redistricting through voluntary mergers over a period of years (noting that the previously discussed S252 did not make the cross-over requirement). Alex Melville asked for clarification on “1250 ADM.” Collins noted that the 1250 student requirement does not create the opportunities for students that are recommended in the *Opportunities to Learn* Report. John Hall asked for clarification on the role of technical centers.

Oettinger also reported on the House/Senate Education Committees joint governance hearing held on March 10.

Action Items

Item H: Consent Agenda

Motion: Stephan Morse moved, John Hall seconded, that the consent agenda be approved, with comment.

- **Minutes of February 16, 2010 SBE Meeting**
- **Initiation of the Rule Making Process – Revisions to Prekindergarten Rules** (Mark Oettinger; Karin Edwards; Manuela Fonseca)

Kathy Larsen submitted two edits to the 2/16/2010 minutes: add Tami Esjberg to the list of NESSC presenters; the name of the after school conference she attended is “Vermont Center for After School Excellence”.

Don Collins requested clarifying information on the proposed revisions to the Prekindergarten rules. Vilaseca responded that these rules revisions are proposed in lieu of proposed legislation and would accomplish the same thing in a timelier manner.

The motion was approved (7-0).

Commissioner Vilaseca expressed his dismay with the just released press announcement from VTNEA (in response to the DOE press release amending the names of the low-achieving schools).

Discussion Items

Item I: State Fiscal Overview (Armando Vilaseca, Bill Talbott)

Bill Talbott distributed and reviewed the Joint Fiscal Office’s Preliminary Education Fund Outlook with the Board. He noted that all indications are that the next 3-4 fiscal years will continue to be very difficult fiscally. Talbott reported that he anticipates the legislature will adjourn in approximately six weeks. He noted that once the work of the Challenge to Change Design Team is completed, it will be sent to the Ways and Means Committee for its consideration.

Item J: National Common Core Standards (Board members, Armando Vilaseca, Rae Ann Knopf Gail Taylor, Michael Hock, Marty Gephart)

Gail Taylor provided information on the national Common Core Standards development process, noting that states have been providing feedback confidentially for the past few months. As of last week the draft standards were released for public comment. Comments can be made up to April 2. Taylor reported that the VTDOE will be convening a group of teachers and network leaders March 29/30 to review and prepare comment to be submitted. Vermont and 47 other states signed an MOU to participate in the process to adopt standards by 9/30/2011. Participation in Race to the Top (RttT), however will require adoption by the end of the current year. Vermont will be meeting with the other NECAP states to focus on alignment between current standards and the proposed national standards, as well as preliminary discussions on the ensuing measurement and assessment development. Already released College and Career Readiness standards will be new for grades 11 and 12. Taylor noted that developers have been responsive to

the concerns that are being brought up. Michael Hock stated that Vermont currently has good standards and that the national standards still have a ways to go to match Vermont's. Developing measurements for these standards will be the next step and that will be a challenging discussion. One area that is still of concern is the consistency in format and language base of the proposed standards.

Board members asked for clarification in the following areas:

- Involvement with higher education (educator preparation, inservice professional development)
- Development of assessments (multiple, summative and formative)
- What happens to NAEP?

Vilaseca noted that currently two non-binding MOUs have been signed: one with NCEE's National Board Examinations group and one with Linda Darling Hammond's SMARTER Balance development group.

Sherry Gile, from Vermont NEA, noted that there is anxiety in the field about this work and urged all concerned to increase communication and information on this topic. DOE staff member Marty Gephart reported on recent communication efforts: an item in the VTDOE's weekly field memo; communication with the math and ELA listserves; development of a Common Core Q&A/FAQ. Hock noted that there is a large amount of funding devoted to this effort by the federal government.

Chair Miller stated that Vermont is ahead of the curve in this area and the key will be to be able to stay in that position.

Item K: Race to the Top (RttT) Application (Armando Vilaseca, Rae Ann Knopf)

Knopf provided an update on recent Race to the Top activities:

- Finalists for the 1st round of applications have been determined
- Kentucky is a finalist and has no charter law in place (nor will it be pursuing)
- Vermont's Steering Committee met on February 23
- Current work includes the following areas: drafting an MOU for field signature; drafting the narratives for the different sections of the applications; establishing meetings with regional superintendents.
- Identification of common themes: increased graduation rate; increased achievement levels for students in poverty, with disabilities and those who are ELL; increased accountability to student achievement; development of the next generation of educators and leaders; increased post secondary aspiration rates.

Stephan Morse asked if the section on great teachers and leaders will require new negotiations. Knopf replied that those discussions will need to happen at the local level – it is not clear what will happen at the statewide level. Knopf also said she was encouraged by the response of the Steering committee at its February 23 meeting and the support that has emerged from discussions. She also noted that seeing the list of first round finalists was a help, especially with the inclusion of Kentucky as a non-charter state. Vachon asked about the amount of time and work that will be needed to complete the application. Knopf responded that it will take approximately 75-80 percent of her time, with similar levels for other department staff. Larsen asked whether or not the reorganization of the department will help with this effort. Knopf responded in the affirmative, noting that the combining the school support and school improvement teams need to happen regardless of RttT.

Motion: Stephan Morse moved, seconded by Don Collins, the State Board of Education vote to support the Vermont Department of Education's Race to the Top (RttT) application to the federal Department of Education, due June 2, 2010. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

2010 Milken Awardee – Tom Sabo, Montpelier High School

During the lunch break, Communications Director Jill Remick and Chair Fayneese Miller led the Board in honoring Milken Educator Award winner Tom Sabo of Montpelier High School. Sabo will travel to Los Angeles next month to be honored along with the winners from the other states at the Milken Educator Award National Conference.

Item L: Work Session – *Opportunities to Learn* report (continued from February)

The Board continued its discussion on the Learning Expectations section of the *Opportunities to Learn* report, focusing on personal learning plans, student outcomes and motivating students, parental involvement, inclusion of higher education, dual enrollment.

Next steps:

- Draft a statement on where we are on the *Opportunity to Learn* report
- Draft statement on support for the Common Core (with assistance from Marty Gephart)
- Draft statement on support for personal learning plans
- Prepare for April discussion on
 - Section III - Prek-16 partnership
 - Section IV – Educator Quality

Under Learning Expectations - Section II - Recommendations:

- Items 2-4 – to be addressed in the Common Core Statement
- Item 5 – language in development (Brian V.)
- Item 6 – language in development (Brian V.)
- Items 7-9 – to be addressed in the Common Core Statement

Vilaseca mentioned the VTNEA's plan for mentoring – a link will be sent to Board members.

Kathy Larsen asked for an update on the status of the department's reorganization plan.

Concluding and Adjournment

Item M: Future Agendas, Wrap Up and Adjourn (Board members, Armando Vilaseca, Carol King)

King reviewed the list of items for the April 13 meeting, including a visit from Marc Tucker of NCEE who will talk about the National Board Examination work, continued discussion on the Opportunities to Learn Report (Sections III and IV), updates on the RttT application and the national Common Core Standards, and a possible tuition appeal.

Motion: At 2:25 p.m., Don Collins moved, seconded by Stephan Morse, to adjourn the March 16, 2010 meeting of the State Board of Education. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Minutes prepared by Carol King